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THE FUTURE OF THE STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM:
BENEFITS, POLICY AND LEVERAGING

by

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Biography

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Abstract

The State Partnership Program (SPP) began in 1993 with the establishment of partnerships to assist three post-Soviet bloc countries in their democratic transition. The importance of establishing partnerships has been recognized and directed among national strategic documentation. This program creates long lasting relationships built on trust where mutually beneficial training opportunities provide a low-cost approach to security cooperation activities such as training in Defense Support of Civil Authorities. The complex hierarchy that make up the program provides a check and balance system that encompasses the program from inception to engagement opportunities. The first ever Strategic Partnership Program Management Plan is in draft form and should consider including guidelines for seeking interstate capabilities, recommendations for partnerships involving mismatched capabilities, direction for establishment and maintenance of a capabilities database, and the creation an Active Duty (AD) and National Guard functional manager to manage partnership creation and maintenance. In addition to the vast benefits that the National Guard reaps from the program, the AD Air Force could leverage the SPP to help achieve the Air Force Strategic Master Plan inclusiveness goals of reinforcing the Total Force concept along with strengthening alliances and partnerships.

Introduction

From its inception in 1993, the State Partnership Program (SPP) has continuously provided a low-cost, small foot print approach to security cooperation across the globe. The program, now over 20 years old, has 73 different partnerships established, with more being considered. The SPP is a joint program that includes both capabilities of the Army and Air National Guard. In the era of constrained budgets and limited active forces, the SPP serves as an economical security cooperation tool created through mutually supporting enduring relationships with allies and partners that support U.S. interests both at home and abroad. As globalization and technological advancements continue, the SPP must adapt in order to maintain its strategic impact as a security cooperation tool and modernize the program to address new challenges.

Newly created policy currently in draft needs to define the SPP roadmap so it remains a flexible, high-quality partnership program. This research will first explore the history of the SPP to include the call for partnerships among strategic documentation. The current structure of the program will then be studied and benefits of the program identified. Future challenges will be incorporated into policy recommendations for inclusion into the Strategic Partnership Program Management Plan (SPPMP), followed by an examination into how the Active Duty (AD) Air Force (AF) can leverage the SPP to support the Air Force Strategic Master Plan (AFSMP).

Thesis

The SPP is a highly economical and beneficial partnership sustaining program that can be leveraged by the AD AF to meet the AFSMP inclusion goals of Total Force and improved relationships with alliances and partnerships. Creating a policy with a focus on the future will continue the accomplishments of established relationships and set up new partnerships for success.



History

The idea for the SPP began in early 1992 with the efforts of Lt Gen John B. Gosnell, the Chief of the National Guard bureau. His desire for a partnership program was twofold. He sought to establish a security cooperation program to assist in the transition of former Soviet bloc states into democracies and also to establish a training opportunity to enhance operational readiness for National Guard members.¹ Latvia was the first of the bloc countries to ask for assistance, specifically for help in creating a home guard. By utilizing the National Guard in this effort, the new program navigated the desire for a citizen-based democracy along a traversable path that would focus on the needs of the citizens, utilizing the concept of the citizen-soldier.² Lithuania and Estonia also expressed an interest in partnerships and by April 27, 1993, the first three partnerships were established.

National Directives

The importance of partnerships can be seen throughout guiding strategic documentation for our armed forces. Because the U.S. cannot meet all the global challenges that the future holds, help from others will be needed.

The **National Security Strategy (NSS)** provides the national strategic direction from the President which guides planning activities for the Department of Defense (DOD). The NSS is the guiding document for which all defense strategies are nested. It makes clear the importance of relationships between the U.S. and her partners. “These partnerships can deliver essential capacity to share the burdens of maintaining global security and prosperity and to uphold the

¹ William B. Boehm: The National Guard State Partnership Program-Forging and Maintaining Effective Security Cooperation Partnerships for the 21st Century, pp. 2.

² William B. Boehm: The National Guard State Partnership Program-Forging and Maintaining Effective Security Cooperation Partnerships for the 21st Century, pp.3.

norms that govern responsible international behavior.”³ It identifies our partners as “the cornerstone of our international engagement.”⁴ President Obama stated that “there are no global problems that can be solved without the United States, and few that can be solved by the United States alone.”⁵ The **National Defense Strategy (NDS)** flows from the NSS. The last one was written in 2008 by Robert Gates and identified promoting security as one of its five objectives. Although the NDS is still a resource identified in Joint Publication 5-0, it has recently been absorbed by the **Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)**. The 2014 **QDR** replaced the 2008 NDS and continues to emphasize the “invigorating efforts to build innovative partnerships and strengthen key alliances and partnerships”⁶ that “will undergird the ability of the United States to face future crises and contingencies.”⁷ This document informs the 2015 **National Military Strategy (NMS)**. As in its previous versions, the NMS continues to identify one of its national military objectives as strengthening the U.S. global network of allies and partners. “We will preserve our alliances, expand partnerships, maintain a global stabilizing presence, and conduct training, exercises, security cooperation activities, and military-to-military engagement.”⁸ By training international partners, the U.S. is able to expand its strategic national security depth.⁹ As seen above, establishing and maintaining partnerships is a national security interest to the U.S. An example of the hierarchical relationships of the strategic guidance can be seen in Figure 1.

³ Barack Obama, *The National Security Strategy*, February 2015, pp. 7.

⁴ Barack Obama, *The National Security Strategy*, February 2015, pp. 3.

⁵ Barack Obama, *The National Security Strategy*, February 2015, pp. 7.

⁶ QDR 2014, v.

⁷ QDR 2104, 9.

⁸ Dempsey, *The National Military Strategy*, pp. 10.

⁹ Dempsey, *The National Military Strategy*, pp. 10.

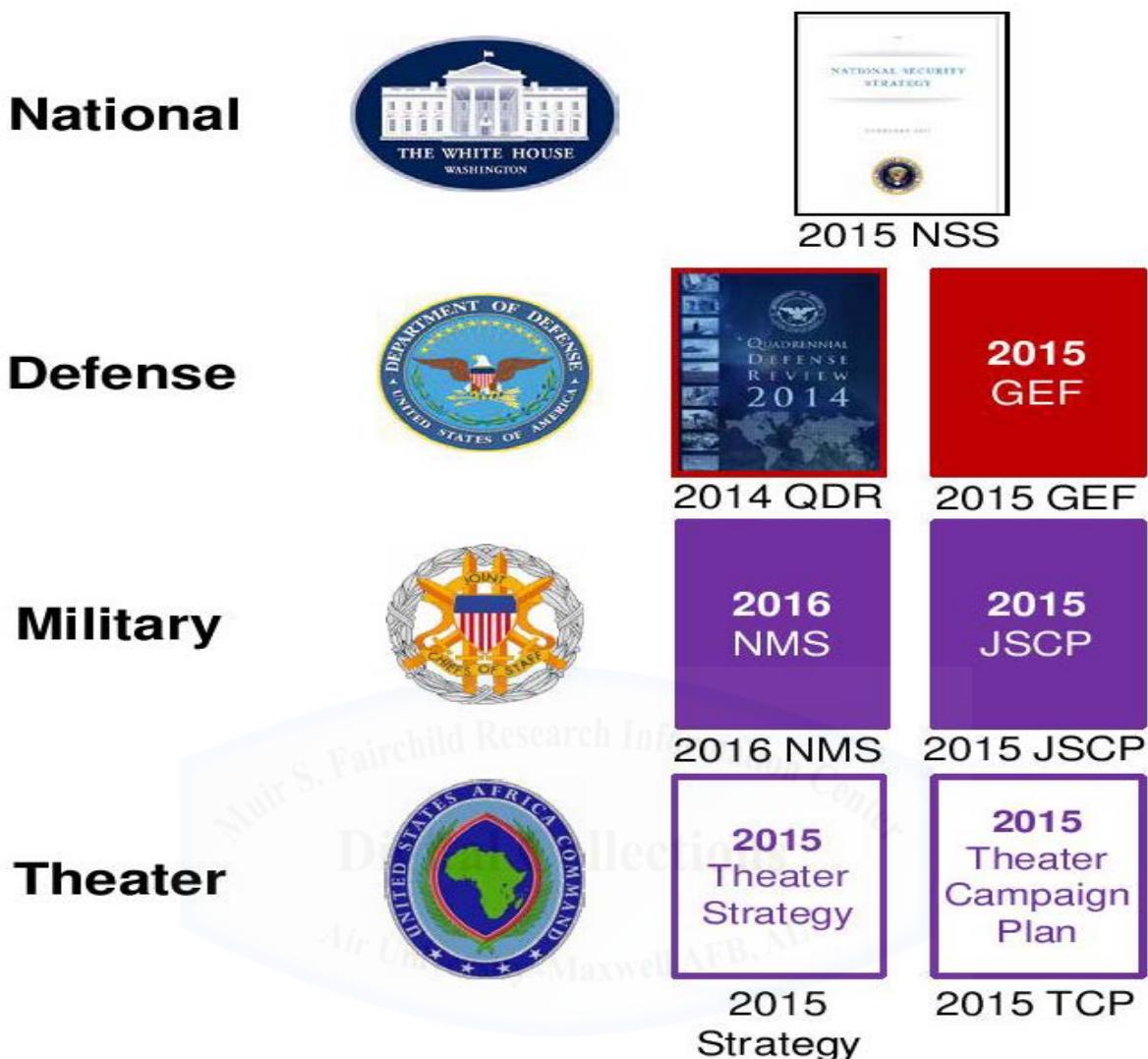


Figure 1¹⁰ AFRICOM example of the strategic guidance hierarchy

Structure

The SPP is built into a complex hierarchy that serves as a check and balance system throughout its lifetime from a partnership's inception to its annual activities. The program is vetted through three separate command chains, the Chief of Mission (COM) in the Embassy, the Combatant Commander (CCMD), and the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff (CJCS). These chains advise the ultimate decision maker, the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF). The program is

¹⁰ AFICOM J-5 Brief to AWC (Maxwell AFB, AL) 30 Mar 2017.

executed by the Chief of the National Guard Bureau (CNGB). Each chain provides a different decision making perspective to the program, both in creating and maintaining a partnership. The COM for the potential partner nation evaluates the country's ability to participate in a U.S. partnership. The CCMD chain looks at the program from an execution standpoint with a focus on the geographic area and the actors within it.¹¹ The CJCS chain looks at it with a broader perspective and takes into account political consideration such as international perception and troop safety. All three chains inform the ultimate decision maker, the SECDEF.

The creation of a partnership starts when an initial request comes in through the COM of the Embassy for the country desiring to establish a partnership.¹² Upon notification of the request, the CCMD evaluates the feasibility of a potential partnership towards achieving their objectives set forth in the Theater Campaign Plan (TCP). These are the military objectives that link the geographic area of the CCMD to the NSS as seen by the AFRICOM example in Figure 1. Each country within the geographic CCMDs area of responsibility has a Country Engagement Plan (CEP) that is nested within the TCP.¹³ The SPP maybe a potential tool that could be used to achieve the operational objectives set forth in the both the TCP and CEP. If the COM and the CCMD believe a partnership would be beneficial for the U.S. and the requesting country, they will send the request up to the SECDEF through the CJCS staff.¹⁴ The CJCS provides its best military advice to the SECDEF for SPP participation. If the SECDEF decides a partnership is beneficial, the request goes to the National Guard Bureau for pairing. The actual pairing is also

¹¹ Lt Col Brian Randolph, (previous desk officer for Jordan, CJCS staff), interviewed by author on 7 December 2017.

¹² GAO State Partnership Program: Improved Oversight, Guidance, and Training Needed for National Guard's Effort with Foreign Partners, May 2012. 8.

¹³ Lt Col Brian Randolph, (previous desk officer for Jordan, CJCS staff), interviewed by author on 7 December 2017.

¹⁴ Ibid.

approved by the SECDEF. After partnerships are established, teams from the selected state are created and consist of a combination of Soldiers and Airmen that best serve the CCMD's military goal.

Partnerships are not established for a one-time event. When a partnership is created, the first consideration in establishing a pairing is the military objective to be achieved. For example, if the objective is to improve the SOF capability of a country, a state would be looked for that has that capability. Second considerations may include population similarities, climate likeness, cultural similarities, or industrial potential.¹⁵ It is the hope of the program that these established cooperation relationships extend beyond the military objective and create connections that can extend the influence of the U.S beyond its borders. The SECDEF remains in control over the existence of the partnerships while the COM and CCMD control the program's execution through approval of the SPP activities that occur within the partner nation and geographic theater of operations. The CNGB is the backbone of the program that maintains the enduring relationships while managing and executing partnership engagements.

Benefits

Our national security is not limited to our borders. Threats from adversarial state and non-state actors exist at all ends of the globe. These adversaries try to find ways to attack our way of life not only through direct action, but through harming our allies. Addressing these transnational threats will require U.S. involvement, but limitation in personnel and equipment prevents the U.S. from being able to address all hazards. The assistance of partners is needed to address global threats, such as non-state actors, that arise within ungoverned spaces inside their borders. The best way to gain assistance from partners is to establish a long lasting bi-

¹⁵ Lt Col David Johnson (National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA) interviewed by author, 30 March 2017.

directional relationship, which is one of the many benefits of the SPP. Members of the National Guard tend to remain in their positions longer than AD members which strengthens these bonds. "The [SPP] has been an extremely successful program in establishing relationships that endure well beyond the rotation of people in and out of positions," said Maj. Gen. Patrick A. Murphy, the director of the National Guard Bureau's Office of Strategy, Policy, Plans, and International Affairs, which oversees the SPP. "I think this is the hallmark of the State Partnership Program." Some of the relationships established are over a decade old.

A lasting relationship goes hand in hand with another benefit of the SPP, the establishment of trust. According to International Relations expert Christopher Andrejes Berzins, "trust has been—and continues to be—an essential element of international relations, be they social, economic or political."¹⁶ As the world becomes more globalized, terror threats are becoming more diverse and networked. Engaging these terror producing adversaries is becoming more challenging and complicated. Trust can have an important, operational role in these situations for it can be converted into risk sharing opportunities. By placing trust in partners and allies in securing the interests of the U.S. abroad, risk may not be decreased, but may be more acceptable by spreading the risk among many. An example of spreading the risk can be seen with joint deployments of partnership countries. Fourteen countries with established partnerships have co-deployed with their National Guard partners in support of operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁷ This allows the U.S. to maintain increased manpower back in the states with less exposure to immediate hazardous conditions.

¹⁶ Christopher Andrejes Berzins, *The puzzle of trust in International Relations: Risk and Relationship management in the organization for security and cooperation in Europe*: (University of London); June 2004, pp. 19.

¹⁷ William Matthews, *The Multinational Guard: Fostering Dynamic Partnerships Worldwide*

Mutually beneficial training opportunities is a third benefit for the SPP. Both the members of the Army and Air National Guard benefit from these security cooperative exchanges. Close to 800 partnership engagements each year allows numerous opportunities for both the partner countries and the U.S. to learn from each other.¹⁸ The exchange provides opportunities that cannot be duplicated by home station training. Experiencing a different culture, hearing other languages, and exploring the decision making of others from real world interactions and situations provide a rich educational environment for both the partners and the National Guard members.¹⁹ The SPP offers opportunities to train and assess foreign partners, therefore allowing the U.S. to assess its own procedures, and create new best practices. For example, six of the eighteen engagements between Botswana and North Carolina in 2015 were based on a range of best practice activities extending from intelligence procedures to airfield operations.²⁰

A fourth benefit for the SPP is the highly economical way it helps to meet U.S. security objectives through building partnership capacity (BPC).²¹ BPC is a collective effort in helping partner countries build security and defense capabilities, and consists of a broad range of security cooperation activities. In addition to the SPP, security cooperation contains activities such as counterdrug programs, peacetime humanitarian assistance programs, global train and equip programs and the global security contingency fund.²² BPC is key for the future because the costs and responsibilities of global leadership will be spread among the U.S. and its partners.²³ The

¹⁸ Lt Col David Johnson (National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA) interviewed by author, 30 March 2017.

¹⁹ William B. Boehm: The National Guard State Partnership Program-Forging and Maintaining Effective Security Cooperation Partnerships for the 21st Century, pp.3.

²⁰ DOD, The State Partnership Program: FY2015 Annual Report to Congress (Dec 2016), pp. 13-14.

²¹ GAO *Building Partner Capacity: Key Practices to effectively manage department of defense efforts to promote security cooperation*, Feb 14, 2013, pp. 2.

²² GAO *Building Partner Capacity: Key Practices to effectively manage department of defense efforts to promote security cooperation*, Feb 14, 2013, pp. 3.

²³ GAO *Building Partner Capacity: Key Practices to effectively manage department of defense efforts to promote security cooperation*, Feb 14, 2013, pp. 2.

U.S. annual budget for the security cooperation activities is approximately \$15B.²⁴ In 2015, the SPP expenditure was approximately \$12.3M of that, thus making SPP well less than 1% of the entire annual security cooperation budget.²⁵ Those funds went towards 779 SPP activities that involved all 6 Geographic Combatant Commands.²⁶ The huge benefits received as a result of the long-term relationships and coordinated SPP engagements make the SPP an excellent return on investment for U.S. tax payers.²⁷

First-hand knowledge of Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) during disaster response is a fifth benefit, and probably one of the more important benefits in terms of capabilities that can be provided to a partner nation. The Army and Air National Guard have a unique mission responsibility where they are accountable to the President of the U.S. for federal affairs and also the Governor of the state to which they belong. This “home guard” relationship gives National Guard members a unique knowledge of the special interaction required for defense forces assisting in disaster response efforts initiated by the state. By contrast, the AD must be invited into a state to assist with a disaster. Guard members work and interact with civilian authorities consistently as they establish disaster plans for which state-assigned military forces may be utilized. Disasters can be anything from snow emergencies to hurricane clean-up to terrorist attacks. It is this intimate relationship with state authorities that the AD lacks, but is highly critical in establishing relationships with foreign partner governments who may seek the skills to integrate disaster response with military assistance. The interaction of Georgia’s National Guard with the nation of Georgia is a great example of how DSCA knowledge helped the nation of Georgia go from having no national response plan to hosting a 35-nation

²⁴ Lt Col David Johnson (National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA) interviewed by author, 30 March 2017.

²⁵ DOD, The State Partnership Program: FY2015 Annual Report to Congress (Dec 2016), pp. 5.

²⁶ Abid, pp. 5.

²⁷ Lt Col David Johnson (National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA) interviewed by author, 30 March 2017.

NATO/Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Crisis Center exercise in just 7 years.²⁸ This is one example of how a partnership has increased global security and protected U.S. interests abroad.

In addition to the benefits listed above, the SPP has a unique ability to create teams not only utilizing Soldiers' or Airmans' military specialty, but civilian career fields as well. The AD only recognizes the credentials of the MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) or AFSC (Air Force Specialty Code) when assigning individuals to tasks. The National Guard members not only have a military specialty, but a civilian one as well. Both of these knowledge bases enrich the capacity of the program, and provide additional expertise to partnership countries.

These many benefits of the SPP make the program a highly valuable, low cost option to achieve military objectives established to meet nationally established goals. With new future challenges along the horizon, it is imperative that the SPP remain flexible in order to maintain its significance. One way to ensure this happens is through the establishment of the CNGB policy to consolidate best practices and streamline coordination while increasing transparency for all National Guard members.

Policy Recommendations

In 2012, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) completed a report of the SPP and noted the program lacked a comprehensive oversight framework that should include goals, objectives and metrics.²⁹ This triggered the writing of The Strategic Partnership Program Management Plan (SPPMP). This future instruction currently resides in draft form awaiting the signature of the CNGB and is a vital piece for the continued success of the SPP.³⁰ The SPPMP

²⁸ DOD, *The State Partnership Program: FY2015 Annual Report to Congress* (Dec 2016), pp. 5.

²⁹ GAO *State Partnership Program: Improved Oversight, Guidance, and Training Needed for National Guard's Effort with Foreign Partners*, May 2012, pp. 39.

³⁰ Lt Col David Johnson (National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA) interviewed by author, 30 March 2017.

will hopefully connect current practices to newly established regulations, making the execution more streamlined with less confusion. Based on its mandate, it will also tie desired national goals to current practices, illustrating fiscal responsibility and strategic efficiency. In order to address future challenges in a complex and globalized world, the following recommendations should be considered for inclusion into the instruction:

- Establishing guidelines for seeking inter-state capabilities
- Addressing capability or mission mismatches
- Directing the establishment and maintenance of a capabilities database
- Creating an AD and National Guard functional manager to oversee partnership creation and maintenance.

Establishing guidelines for seeking interstate capabilities is the first recommendation for inclusion into the SPPMP. With globalization and technology comes changing threats and new enemies, which will drive the necessity to explore potential limitations in the current program. The present partnership program appears to be built under an industrial era concept and has worked well within it since its inception. New threats among contested domains might drive the need for partnerships to look beyond security cooperation or SOF functions. Cyber is not a new domain, but new threats within it have far reaching challenges that can affect both the U.S. and its partners. Threats in this domain can challenge our inclusiveness with partners as the U.S. attempts to integrate capabilities with partners to expand its influence. The SPP is not built to expand beyond the current one state, one country relationship. This is understandable since a partner nation may not have the capacity to take on a second state partnership since the partner nation is responsible to pay for diplomatic visits and portions of the required annual training.³¹

³¹ Ibid.

Consideration to address further partnership needs beyond the initial security cooperation relationship established could take the form of an adoption program. States with established partnerships that have identified needs that go beyond their capabilities should have an official avenue to reach out to other states and request specific capability assistance, such as space or cyber. In an interview for this research with Lt Col David Johnson, representative from the National Guard Bureau (NGB) International Affairs Office and expert in the SPP, Lt Col Johnson stated an informal inter-state coordination capability already exists and is being executed.³² It is argued that this process should be identified and officially labeled in the SPPMP to formalize it so all states are equally aware of this service. Through an adoption program, as it is today, the lead state in the partnership program would remain the main connection to the paired country.³³ The secondary state would work through the lead state to help meet the capability needs of the country and accomplish the designated U.S. military objective. This adopted relationship maintained through the paired country would streamline efforts to match capabilities to CCMD objectives already agreed upon.

Suggestions dealing with partnerships involving mismatched capabilities or missions is the second recommendation for inclusion in the SPPSM. Many partner nations tend to be a generation behind in technology when compared to the U.S. As the future continues bring forth rapid technological advancement, this generation gap may exacerbate already misaligned capabilities or mission sets that exist between states and their partner nation, ultimately neutralizing the partnership. Disestablishment of partnerships is not seen as a possibility by Lt Col Johnson. He stated the relationships are too valuable and other connections within the state would be sought out to avoid ending the partnership. In order to strengthen the current program

³² Lt Col David Johnson (National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA) interviewed by author, 30 March 2017.

³³ Ibid.

when situations of mismatched capabilities or mission occur, policy options to address these situations should be identified in the SPPMP to prevent gaps in meeting CCMD's objectives. These options can include establishing new capability connections, utilizing the adoption program, identifying the process for establishing a new state partner for the existing partnership, or as a last resort, instructions for partnership disintegration.

Directing the establishment and maintenance of a capabilities database is the third recommendation for inclusion into the SPPMP. Because National Guard member's military specialty and civilian profession make up the foundation upon which the SPP is built, bilateral officers in each state should maintain a current database of these capabilities for reference and awareness. As described earlier, the utilization of civilian professions is a benefit for the SPP. This database will help make informed decisions on future partnerships, or determine if there is an available capability that can assist another state with an adoption request. Software technology already exists that can support a capability database. The AD AF has a Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP) that establishes a core group of Airmen who possess moderate to high levels of proficiency in communicating in a foreign language.³⁴ LEAP uses software that allows them to track AFSCs and languages of participants.³⁵ LEAP is also able to track movement of their participants using the same software. This software could be utilized to maintain a database of AFSC and MOS, along with civilian career fields that could be leveraged by the SPP in meeting military objectives established by the CCMD. It could also be used as a tracking method for past, current, and future partnership engagements. Cost should be minimal

³⁴ Sheila Mittersen, (Air Force Culture and Language Center, Maxwell AFB, AL) interviewed by author, 22 March 2017.

³⁵ Ibid.

since the software has already been established. This database establishment and maintenance should be directed by the SPPMP.

The creation of an AD and National Guard SPP functional manager is the fourth recommendation for inclusion into the SPPMP. The SPP has become a robust and extensive program and with future changes in service functions and capabilities, flexibility needs to be built into the program. As with the previous two industrial revolutions, massive advancement in technology and communications are driving a revolution that is quickly evolving from the third derivative built upon digital advancements and technology fusion into a fourth industrial revolution characterized by velocity and scope that will affect the way humans will live, work and relate to each other.³⁶ Artificial intelligence is already among us and is just one example of the unknown future potential that will significantly influence business, government and people.³⁷ In addition to the establishment of a database to track capabilities, the complex unknown future drives the need to incorporate transparency into the SPP which can be manifested through the creation of separate SPP functional managers both within the AD and the NGB.

The AD members that deal with the SPP are all located within the J-5 division of the CJCS staff. Knowledge of the SPP is spread among the numerous country desk teams, and is localized to the individual partnership established for their respective country. An AD SPP functional manager could oversee all current partnerships and make recommendations before capability gaps occur and also be a conduit for future partnerships. Although this recommendation lies outside the SPPMP, it should be explored in the future to streamline SPP execution.

³⁶ Klaus Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What Its Means and How to Respond*.
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2015-12-12/fourth-industrial-revolution> (Dec 12, 2015). pp 1.

³⁷ Klaus Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What Its Means and How to Respond*.
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2015-12-12/fourth-industrial-revolution> (Dec 12, 2015).

The NGB already has a position that administers the SPP and deals with establishing policy, Program Objective Memorandum, funding and distribution of money.³⁸ This position is task-saturated dealing with the above responsibilities. A new NGB SPP functional manager could establish and maintain an SPP portal that includes input from each bilateral officer's capability database. This person should have first-hand knowledge of each partnership established and partnerships under consideration, and would be the gatekeeper for the capabilities available. A NGB SPP functional manager would also be helpful in assisting individual states in finding a desired adoption partner for a specific training or exercise purpose. This person would also need to be the expert on the nature of each partnership and be made aware of any potential change in mission or capability that might affect it. The establishment of functional managers will allow the AD and National Guard to stay ahead of future security gaps in partnerships that most certainly will occur as fourth generation technology rapidly comes to the forefront.

As seen above, the SPP is a high-value, low-cost program that provides opportunities that can go beyond security cooperation functions. The recommendation above will help the program stay resilient as the world enters the fourth industrial revolution characterized by speed and velocity. The National Guard and the CCMD are the frontline benefactors from the program, but as it will be seen, the AD AF can also leverage the unparalleled training opportunities and trust-established partnerships to help meet goals within the AF Strategic Master Plan (AFSMP).

AD AF Leveraging

The SPP is a hidden gem that sits in the CCMD capability toolbox that can be leveraged by the AD AF to help achieve objectives within the AFSMP. “The AFSMP operationalizes the Air Force Strategy by providing authoritative direction that informs Service-wide planning and

³⁸ Lt Col David Johnson (National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA) interviewed by author, 30 March 2017.

prioritization on a 20-year timeline.”³⁹ It focuses on the need for a more agile and inclusive force in the future. It leverages two imperatives, agility and inclusiveness, to help drive a culture change needed to meet future challenges. The inclusiveness goals and objectives relevant to the leveraging of the SPP are listed below in Table 1. When goals are referenced in the remainder of this paper, it is implied they are AFSMP inclusiveness goals.

IN1: One Air Force that optimizes Active, Guard, Reserve and Civilian contributions to the Air Force mission, while recognizing and leveraging their unique strengths.

IN1.2: Incorporate Total Force considerations wherever possible to increase the flexibility of our force structure and optimize our operational responses. Focus on identifying appropriate force mix options, eliminating structural and legal barriers, and increasing opportunities for component integration.

IN1.3: Synchronize programming and planning across the Active and Reserve Components to enable specific and timely input to the HAF that ensures adequate time to align ARC planning and programming efforts.

IN3: Improved relationships with Congress; think tanks and academia; industry; the joint and interagency team; and alliances and partnerships.

IN3.3: Deepen our relationships with the joint team, intelligence community, diplomatic institutions, developmental agencies, local governments, businesses, communities, and international partners through sustained dialogue, increased training and exchange, aviation security cooperation, and iterative enterprises to codify shared doctrine, tactics, and capabilities.

Table 1: Inclusiveness Goals and some objectives from the AF Strategic Master Plan

Currently, the majority of the AD service component do not take part in or utilize the SPP. If service members have never worked as a Defense Attaché in an Embassy or as a part of a CCMD or CJSC staff, they probably are unaware of the existence of the program. Goal 1 of the AFSMP

³⁹ US Air Force. Air Force Strategic Master Plan, 2015.

stresses the Total Force concept and the importance of leveraging the unique strengths of the AD and National Guard in the combine effort to accomplish the AF mission. Goal 3 identifies the need to improve relationships between alliances and partnerships. The AD AF can leverage the SPP to help achieve both goals 1 and 3 in the AFSMP, through the accomplishment of the objectives listed in Table 1.

Goal 1 of the AFSMP will be explored first. The objectives listed under goal 1 stress incorporating Total Force considerations, and synchronizing programming and planning between the AD AF and the AF Reserve Component for which the Air National Guard resides. The AD AF could leverage the SPP to generate combined training opportunities that not only strengthen partnerships, but also the Total Force concept. The addition of AD AF members into partnership engagements can provide further diverse opportunities from training and education. The AD AF could also provide a needed capability that the National Guard may lack or temporarily unable to provide. All SPP activities need to be vetted through the COM and CCMD in order to maintain awareness of activities within their theater. Since the backbone of the program is the Army and Air National Guard, AD AF requests for training engagements outside a scheduled event will require additional coordination with the participating state, partner nation, COM and the CCMD. For smaller countries, additional engagements may not be possible because of their limited capacity or funding. Larger countries may welcome the additional interaction. All these requests could be synchronized and coordinated through the suggested establishment of AD and NGB SPP functional managers. This initiative might be easier said than done, but the benefit will be definitely worth the effort in meeting Total Force and strengthening partnership goals. Choosing to leverage the SPP for training opportunities illustrates the flexibility of the force structure, while optimizing operational opportunities.

Goal 3 identifies the need to deepen relationships with international partners through “sustained dialogue, increased training and exchange, aviation security cooperation, and iterative enterprises to codify shared doctrine, tactics, and capabilities.”⁴⁰ Partnership is not just a word in the SPP title, but the actual purpose of the program. Participating states are able to maintain a sustained dialogue with partner nations that is not possible with the AD. National Guard members do not rotate positions often and therefore, are able to foster long term relationships built on trust and legitimacy. The 779 SPP activities executed during the FY2015 sufficiently addressed the identified training and exchange requirements stressed in the AFSMP goal 3 objective. The FY2015 partnership engagements included aviation security cooperation events, shared doctrine exchanges, along with tactics and capabilities interactions.⁴¹ With the possibility to include the AD AF in some of these future training opportunities, the valuable benefits achieved would become tri-fold, positively affecting the partner nation, the National Guard, and the AD AF. Whether the AD AF initially chooses to leverage the SPP to strength the Total Force concept or for improving relationships with allies or partners, the AD will receive the synergistic benefits of establishing a stronger, flexible force able to meet the complex challenges of the future.

⁴⁰ US Air Force. Air Force Strategic Master Plan, 2015. pp. 34.

⁴¹ DOD, The State Partnership Program: FY2015 Annual Report to Congress (Dec 2016), pp. 5.

Conclusion

The SPP is a low cost, small footprint partnership enterprise created through mutually supporting enduring relationships with allies and partners that support U.S. interests both home and abroad. The program has established many long-standing relationships where trust is the foundation of professional and personal friendships. Just like any organization whose purpose is to achieve military objectives and advance U.S. interests globally, the policies that are employed need to be reviewed and assessed against future challenges. As seen earlier, the SPP is a very valuable program with a wide range of benefits. Enhancements to the current executed operation needs to find its way into the first written SPP instruction by the NGB in order to maintain the program's high quality output as it grows among a fourth industrial revolution. Also, the SPP is a hidden gem that sits in the CCMD capability toolbox that can be leveraged by the AD AF to help achieve its inclusive goals of strengthening the Total Force concept and relationships with alliances and partners. The ability of the SPP to build lasting relationship is what makes the program unique and relevant to address security challenges seen today and will arise tomorrow.

Appendix A



Figure 2: Current Established Partnerships⁴²

⁴² DOD, The State Partnership Program: FY2015 Annual Report to Congress (Dec 2016).

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